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ABSTRACT

At the direction of the Florida State legislature, a study was done of outcomes assessment in Florida's higher education institutions. A committee formed to conduct the study met on nine occasions to review background information, receive public testimony, and discuss draft materials. The committee received information from public and private postsecondary institutions, the Board of Regents, the State Board of Community Colleges, legislative staff, the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Auditor General, a nationally recognized expert on postsecondary education assessment, and Florida's business and industry sector. The committee concluded that fundamental, systemic issues associated with the structure, financing, management, and productivity of higher education in Florida should be addressed in the next master plan for postsecondary education. In particular, the issue of assuring higher productivity and more effective use of available resources requires attention. Among other major findings were that Florida has no comprehensive assessment policy at the state level and that on-going assessment has not been done at most colleges and universities. The committee also formulated six recommendations for Florida higher education assessment. Included are reproductions of the state statutes, and a table showing comparison of effectiveness components and accountability legislation. (21 references) (JB)

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Report and Recommendations of the
Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission

1992 - REPORT 5

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The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, initially created by executive order in 1980 and subsequently given statutory authority (SS 240.145 and 240.147, Florida Statutes), serves as a citizen board to coordinate the efforts of postsecondary institutions and provide independent policy analyses and recommendations to the State Board of Education and the Legislature. The Commission is composed of 11 members of the general public and one full-time student registered at a postsecondary education institution in Florida. Members are appointed by the Governor with the approval of three members of the State Board of Education and subject to confirmation by the Senate.

The major responsibility of the Commission is preparing and updating every five years a master plan for postsecondary education. The enabling legislation provides that the Plan "shall include consideration of the promotion of quality, fundamental educational goals, programmatic access, needs for remedial education, regional and state economic development, international education programs, demographic patterns, student demand for programs, needs of particular subgroups of the population, implementation of innovative educational techniques and technology, and the requirements of the labor market. The capacity of existing programs, in both public and independent institutions, to respond to identified needs shall be evaluated and a plan shall be developed to respond efficiently to unmet needs."

Other responsibilities include recommending to the State Board of Education program contracts with independent institutions; advising the State Board regarding the need for and location of new programs, branch campuses and centers of public postsecondary education institutions; reviewing public postsecondary education budget requests for compliance with the State Master Plan; and periodically evaluating the State's 28 regional coordinating councils for vocational education and adult general education.

Further information about the Commission, its publications, meetings and other activities may be obtained from the Commission office, 231 Collins Building, Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-0400; telephone (904) 488-7894.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PLANNING COMMISSION

***OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION***

Prepared in Response to Specific Appropriations 573 through 576
of the
1991 General Appropriations Act
Chapter 91-193, Laws of Florida

1992 - Report 5

March, 1992

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through provision in the 1991 General Appropriations Act, Specific Appropriations 573 through 576, the Legislature directed the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission to review outcomes assessment in Florida higher education institutions. Proviso language directed the Commission to:

conduct a review of the status of outcomes assessment in Florida in comparison with model practices in place in other states, individual institutions and accrediting bodies. The Commission shall identify policies and procedures designed to encourage improvements in student learning and overall institutional effectiveness. The review shall also include recommendations regarding the use of outcomes assessment information in such areas as program reviews and incentive funding; and recommended approaches to measuring student and institutional outcomes.

The Chairman of the Commission assigned this study to the Program Committee under the chairmanship of Tully Patrowicz; other Committee members included Robert Kerrigan, Robert Taylor, Vilma Diaz, and Mark Wheeler. The Committee met on nine occasions between June 1991 and March 1992 to review background information, receive public testimony, and discuss draft materials related to this study. Several entities were represented during the course of the study, including public and private postsecondary institutions, the Board of Regents, the State Board of Community Colleges, legislative staff, the Office of the Governor, and the Office of the Auditor General. The Commission was also interested in receiving input from a recognized national expert in postsecondary education assessment as well as input from the Florida business/industry sector. To achieve this, the Commission requested reactions to a draft document from Dr. Aims McGuinness, Director for Higher

Education Policy for the Education Commission of the States, and Dr. Thomas Land, Manager of Engineering Training for Motorola Incorporated in Boynton Beach, Florida. Dr. McGuinness has extensive experience in education. He has served as a consultant for many states, higher education systems, and individual institutions on assessment and quality issues. Dr. Land's experience in business and industry, particularly in employee training, provided the Commission with input from the perspective of a consumer of postsecondary education's products. Dr. Land has also been active as a resource person with the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability. Dr. McGuinness and Dr. Land provided valuable insights and stimulated much discussion, and several of their points are incorporated into this report.

Concern with accountability in education and developments in assessment in Florida at the postsecondary level have generally mirrored events in several states in recent years. Legislative action in 1991 to enact accountability legislation for the state's public community colleges and universities reflected growing interest in public access to more and different kinds of information related to the functioning of public postsecondary institutions. In like manner, since the mid-1980's many states have implemented special reporting requirements associated with accountability, student performance, or institutional effectiveness. Assessment in Florida has been a continuing concern of the Commission. *The Master Plan for Florida Postsecondary Education* (1982) addressed assessment in terms of educational quality and the need to strengthen educational performance and process. *The Master Plan Update* (1988) as well as *An Assessment of the General Education Curriculum in State Universities and Community Colleges* (1989)

and *The Impact of Undergraduate Enhancement Funding* (1990) also examined assessment related issues.

In the process of conducting this study, the Commission made several observations related to assessment in general as well as outcomes assessment, student learning, institutional effectiveness, accreditation, and program review. Assessment was viewed as having two critical aspects. The first aspect involved determining the key issues of assessment that should be measured. The second aspect involved determining how well the institutions perform against those issues. These two areas evolved from the concern that if the focus of assessment was fallacious then the results of assessment activities would not be reliable. In discussing issues in these areas and searching for resolutions, it became clear that larger, more pervasive concerns existed that should be considered initially. Specifically, the Commission concluded that fundamental, systemic issues associated with the structure, financing, management, and productivity of higher education in Florida should be addressed in the next master plan for postsecondary education. In particular, the issue of assuring higher productivity and more effective use of available resources requires significant attention. While this report identifies specific problems and areas for improvement in assessment, effectiveness, accreditation, and program review, the Commission strongly believes that those broader issues should be addressed first. Moreover, the Commission strongly believes that such broader issues clearly signal the need for an in-depth evaluation of the extent to which major changes in the way things have been done in the high growth period of the 1970s and 1980s will be required in order to meet the challenge of the economic realities and continuing demographic changes in the 1990s.

The complexity of this study coupled with intense interest from educators, legislators, and business representatives with the issues discussed led the Commission to several findings. Major findings are summarized here and examined more completely in the full report.

- *Florida has no comprehensive assessment policy at the state level. Consequently, there are no established goals to determine if the postsecondary system is fulfilling its mission.*

- *On-going, systematic, and comprehensive assessment for the purpose of evaluating overall institutional effectiveness has not been a priority at most colleges and universities, although individual institutions and system offices have, in varying degrees, independently developed assessment procedures.*

- *Several findings developed concerning issues related to postsecondary education assessment:*

- * *Quality in postsecondary education is a primary concern, yet there is a paucity of information to indicate how well the educational process works or what quality really means.*

- * *There is little information available from institutions on how student learning is measured or whether the colleges and universities apply and assess principles of good practice in undergraduate education.*

- * *Existing reward systems within institutional structures do not adequately recognize teaching, although teaching at the undergraduate level is a major focus in Florida's higher education policy. This is a major problem and will be addressed in the Master Plan.*

* *Enhancement funding may be an effective way of encouraging colleges and universities to focus on innovative or exploratory programs to improve institutional effectiveness.*

* *Program review and accreditation activities could be strengthened by implementing assessment policies that foster a comprehensive, on-going approach.*

● *There is significant and widespread concern regarding the roles, responsibilities, and relationships between the education sector and the business sector. Representatives of business and industry question postsecondary education's commitment to meeting the private sector's needs. Educators believe they receive conflicting messages from the private sector as to what its needs, standards, and expectations are.*

Based on the study's findings, the Commission reached several conclusions regarding the legislative directive in proviso on outcomes assessment and its relationship with broader systemic issues in postsecondary education.

(1) *Assessment of educational outcomes should be an integral and continuous part of the functioning of a postsecondary institution. The purposes and utility of assessment are greatly diminished when assessment is conducted primarily to support other periodic activities such as accreditation and program review.*

(2) *Consistency and comparability of assessment measures are important, and all colleges and universities plans should include components to assess the three major functions of a public postsecondary institution: instruction, research, and public service. Within the three primary functions, assessment should be conducted in several areas such as general education, student performance, and equity. The State and its*

institutions would most benefit if agreement is reached on the assessment of selected areas.

(3) *The educational process and student learning should be central to institutional assessment plans. Assessment is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The study enumerates principles of good practice which are presented as fundamental to a quality undergraduate learning experience. Each public postsecondary institution should routinely assess the application of such principles (i.e., frequent student-faculty contact, active learning, and high expectations) in the delivery of undergraduate education.*

(4) *The State needs to address fundamental and systemic issues related to the structure, financing, management, productivity, and delivery of postsecondary education. Concerns examined in this report, including assessment, accountability, program review, accreditation, student learning, and institutional effectiveness, are symptoms of more pervasive concerns in Florida's higher education system. Significant change may be required in the way the State thinks about providing and delivering postsecondary education. The preparation of a new master plan for postsecondary education will allow the Commission to seek extensive and broad-based public response relevant to issues concerning structure, such as mission and goals for postsecondary education, as well as financing, management, and delivery of higher education in Florida.*

(5) *Conflicting forces internal to the institution, especially the public universities, have the potential of creating impediments to institutions' responsiveness to the needs of such diverse groups as government, business, industry, private organizations and associations. Instruction, research, and public service are all functions of public postsecondary institutions. Determining the*

emphasis and allocation of finite resources among these three functions will produce internal conflicts. The Commission received public testimony that public institutions are not as responsive as they should be to the needs of the wide range of constituencies which colleges and universities serve. The perception exists that there is an increasing difference between what the faculty want to do and what the public wants done. Inherent internal and external factors such as the faculty reward system may conflict with a state priority calling for quality in undergraduate education and teaching. A related concern is "mission drift" where colleges and universities become involved in activities tangential to their primary focus. Also, institutions focus too strongly on a selected aspect of their mission or function to the detriment of other elements in the mission statement.

(6) Concurrently, business and industry have a responsibility to determine specifically what their needs are and articulate these clearly to colleges and universities. In this process, employers should differentiate among educational levels by identifying knowledge, skills, and behavior expected from recent high school graduates as opposed to associate or certificate recipients and baccalaureate graduates.

It would be in the best interests of the citizens of Florida and the postsecondary institutions to formulate a comprehensive, robust state policy that focuses on institutional effectiveness and return on investment. Systematic, continuous assessment at the institutional level of selected core components as well as analysis of several key principles of good undergraduate education should provide the kinds of information needed to evaluate the level of quality present in the State's higher education system. Nonetheless, the Commission does not recommend moving to such an assessment process at this time in light of the greater need to use the master plan

process during the next twelve months to address fundamental issues of management, structure, productivity, and financing of Florida's postsecondary education system. A result of the *Master Plan* process should be a definition of the role of assessment and how it should be implemented in the State's postsecondary education system. The citizens of Florida need assurance that funds invested in the State's postsecondary education system are being utilized in the most effective manner to provide the greatest return on available resources.

I. INTRODUCTION

Proviso language accompanying Specific Appropriations 573 through 576 of the 1991 General Appropriations Act directed the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission to review outcomes assessment in Florida higher education institutions. The Legislature directed the Commission to:

conduct a review of the status of outcomes assessment in Florida in comparison with model practices in place in other states, individual institutions and accrediting bodies. The Commission shall identify policies and procedures designed to encourage improvements in student learning and overall institutional effectiveness. The review shall also include recommendations regarding the use of outcomes assessment information in such areas as program reviews and incentive funding; and recommended approaches to measuring student and institutional outcomes.

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This report presents the Commission's response to the Legislature's charge to review outcomes assessment in Florida generally as well as to examine the relationship between assessment and several associated areas, including student learning, institutional effectiveness, program review, accreditation, and incentive funding. It should be emphasized at the outset that both public and private postsecondary institutions in the State conduct a variety of assessment activities in order to appraise their effectiveness in the areas of instruction, research, and service. While it was beyond the scope of this study to chronicle the efforts of faculty members, department chairs, deans, and other units within an individual institution, the Commission recognizes that assessment has been a continuous concern within Florida's colleges and universities. The focal point of this study was statewide outcomes assessment. The report reviews existing outcomes assessment activities such as the College-level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) and related activities such as program review and accreditation that take place throughout the

public community college and university systems. The study also summarizes other states' approaches to outcomes assessment.

As the study progressed, it became apparent that concerns with assessment and other areas mentioned in proviso were part of much broader issues in higher education. Dissatisfaction with higher education has increased across the nation in recent years--the cost of a college degree, faculty productivity, academic bureaucratic structures, and the quality of student performance are topics frequently cited as major concerns by groups external to education such as the general public, state legislatures, and business. From initial discussions of assessment and outcomes emerged two related and overriding concerns. First, this particular report should not attempt to consider the larger, fundamental issues in Florida's postsecondary education system. The concept of major, systemic changes, however, should be addressed in the next master plan for postsecondary education in Florida. Second, making recommendations in this report to modify state policy or procedure would not have a significant impact on improving outcomes measurement given the existence of the larger issues. Recommending changing the statewide assessment of outcomes would provide only short-term answers to some problems because of the broader, more pervasive management and financing issues facing postsecondary education that Florida has not resolved. Comments received from representatives of education, the legislature, and business/industry, and public testimony provided during public meetings corroborated problems identified by members of the Commission.

Rather than submit a report responding only to proviso language, the Commission elected to discuss assessment within the context of the more pervasive systemic problems in postsecondary education. Thus, the

Commission has taken the position that assessment should not be considered in isolation of what needs to be a fundamental reconsideration of the management and financing of higher education. In order to strengthen planning and quality improvement efforts, assessment should be a series of planned activities rather than a spontaneous reaction to a problem. Assessment should make a difference for improving institutional functioning and not be just a collection of peripheral activities. Assessment should reinforce and encourage major restructuring of the postsecondary education delivery system to make it more efficient and effective.

For purposes of this report, discussion of assessment is composed of two general aspects. The first aspect involves determining the key assessment issues. Related concerns raised at this level include consideration of state postsecondary educational mission as well as institutional mission, goals, organizational structures, and financing policy and practice. The second aspect centers on how well the mission, goals and related objectives are being met. This second element of assessment moves to the specifics of discussing how well the institutions perform against the key issues. How well do colleges and universities do what they should do every day--instruction, research, public service? Basic considerations on the relationship between assessment and other activities such as program review and accreditation characterize this level. Identification of areas to assess and discussion of corresponding measures with performance standards also occurs at the second level. Although the format of this report does not directly separate sections into these two aspects, the dual concerns of identifying the key issues and determining how well they are being met are integrated into the discussion. The report examines general outcomes assessment areas in Chapter II. Many topics discussed in Chapter II are explored in greater detail in

two background papers prepared during the course of the study. Chapter III expands on several issues identified with outcomes assessment. Finally, the concluding chapter presents findings and conclusions and summarizes the Commission's position on the need to address the assessment issues within a larger discussion of higher education that will occur during the master plan process over the next year.

II. OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: AN OVERVIEW

The following discussion is based on the premise that assessment is a process, a means to an end rather than an end itself. While there are different definitions of assessment in the literature, for the purposes of this study assessment will be defined as the process of gathering quantitative and qualitative evidence about the impact and functioning of the educational system and its component parts (adapted from Boyer and Ewell, 1988). Results of meaningful assessment activities provide valuable information related to a specific course or program, a department, an institution or a system so that each of these entities can evaluate itself with its past performance. Additionally, assessment data is useful to compare institutions with each other, with national and local norms, and with established goals.

Good, comprehensive assessment can be elusive because, as a process, it is dependent on institutional and individual commitment to completing several steps well. Most important at the outset is a clear understanding of why the assessment is taking place. Based on that determination, several other questions must also be answered prior to initiating the actual compilation of data: How will the assessment information be used? For what purpose? Who will use it? When will it be used? Once agreement is reached on these concerns, the appropriate performance indicators must be identified. Concurrently, the researchers must have access to reliable, timely data--either quantitative or qualitative--for those indicators. For example, to assess the effectiveness of a discipline in preparing students for the labor force, someone has to decide what kinds of things to measure as indicators of effectiveness. Too frequently proper data is not available for the indicators. In the case of assessing in the discipline, it would be important to know if program graduates are working in a position

for which the discipline prepared them. Obtaining historical data of this nature may be impossible if the academic department or the college has not maintained a current file of graduates or surveyed discipline graduates regularly.

In sum, assessment is essential but it must usually serve several masters with their different agendas. Conflicting priorities between state and institutional agendas exacerbate attempts to assess progress toward state goals. The Commission perceived that postsecondary institutions have occasionally been unable to demonstrate that appropriations or allocations to achieve specific state goals were actually used by the colleges and universities for those goals. Additionally, all public postsecondary institutions do not appear to be strongly committed to clarifying mission statements, setting articulate goals, and conducting on-going assessment activities to evaluate progress. Existing organizational structures and academic bureaucracies may hamper this kind of in-depth self-evaluation. Other impediments to effective assessment include inadequate human, fiscal, and physical resources; lack of clarity or consensus on the initial questions of why the assessment is needed and how it will be used; and disagreement on measures and standards to establish. Pragmatically, identifying meaningful measures for outcomes and accessing data for those measures may not always be possible. Purposeful evaluation for any endeavor carries inherent problems. Such difficulties, however, should not be a barrier to educational assessment.

The assessment process is applicable to diverse areas: student performance, faculty, courses, programs, majors or disciplines, departments, administrative units, institutions, and systems. Nonetheless, the overriding purpose of assessment should be to provide

information to assist state and institutional policy makers in making informed decisions related to concerns such as progress toward goals, the need for improvement changes, recognition of strengths and weaknesses. Because it is an extensive, complex subject and to facilitate discussion, assessment is often broken into subsets based on the chronology and the kinds of information to be examined. Educators have found it convenient to conceptualize assessment of the educational experience in four general areas and identify specific indicators for each subset:

Inputs -- e.g., student scores on admissions tests, budget allocations, instructional expenditures; number of faculty and academic degrees, library volumes.

Process -- e.g., registration procedures, drop/add procedures, applying for financial aid.

Outputs -- e.g., number of graduates, student credit hours generated, student progression to higher grade.

Outcomes -- e.g., performance of graduates on licensure, certification, and professional school examinations, employer satisfaction with graduates, placement rates.

Proviso for this study centered on outcomes assessment, with specific reference to policies and practices in Florida as well as in other states, institutions, and accrediting bodies. Additionally, the study was to explore the relationships among program review, incentive funding, and outcomes assessment. Finally, the Legislature called for an identification of, and recommendations concerning, policies and procedures to improve and measure student learning and overall institutional effectiveness. As this chapter addresses these topics, it concurrently provides a foundation for the issues and conclusions presented in the following chapters.

Background

Accountability was a major issue in Florida for all levels of public education during the 1991 legislative session. Legislation now requires the Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges to establish accountability processes and report annually to the Legislature and Governor on the achievement of educational outcome measures. The Board of Regents' plan, with a timetable identifying specific performance standards and related goals to be implemented each year, was submitted on October 1, 1991. The State Board of Community Colleges' plan, timetable, and issues were submitted on January 1, 1992. These accountability plans and reports will explain how institutions will determine their effectiveness. In concert with system and institutional accountability charges, the Commission through this study has addressed the why of the basic concept: assessment. In defining the rationale of assessment for state policy purposes, other issues--such as who should assess, how should assessment information be used, and what should be assessed--are then more manageable.

Assessment has been an important activity throughout higher education for years. Historically, faculty have long been involved in assessment through the analysis of student performance in order to evaluate teaching methods, materials, and course content. At the institutional level, most colleges and universities have engaged in some type of assessment activity. Few institutions, however, collect and analyze outcomes data on a regular, systematic and comprehensive basis as part of an ongoing plan to improve either student achievement or institutional effectiveness.

Interest in, or resignation to, assessment escalated in recent years following national concern with the quality of higher education

generally and growing frustration with the performance of American students. Also, many of the present assessment efforts are in response to legislative and the general public's concern with how public funds are spent in higher education and calls for accountability. A recent report by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) (Lenth, 1990) indicates that the increased emphasis on accountability has developed in some states as a result of strained fiscal and economic conditions, while in other states the accountability issue reflects, at least in part, a negative perception of or reaction to higher education. Outcomes assessment has been described as a powerful force for change, specifically as a vehicle for improving the quality of education. Current concerns with accountability in higher education have focused on outcomes assessment as the way to achieve accountability as well as to enhance planning and quality improvement.

Some individuals, both internal and external to education, view outcomes assessment as the major response to accountability and the avenue to quality improvements in education. Thus, a fundamental question influencing any discussion of assessment is: Why assess? While there are numerous responses, the predominant reason offered by educators and others is to move toward or to sustain institutional excellence. Assessment and educational quality have been linked by legislators in the funding process, by the U.S. Department of Education in the accrediting process, by educators in the teaching/learning process.

Assessment as a process and the results produced may serve many specific purposes that are perhaps actually subsets of excellence or educational quality. Among these purposes are:

- *To effect educational improvement*
- *To demonstrate external accountability and monitor costs*
- *To assist students in selecting postsecondary institutions*
- *To distribute or to generate funds for institutions*
- *To change the way teaching and learning occur in individual classrooms*
- *To provide information about students' change and development*

Some of these purposes are institution focused while others are state or system focused. With varied agendas on assessment, it is imperative that the purposes of assessment be clear to all from the outset. A review of the assessment literature and experiences of other states and institutions suggests that an appropriate assessment plan should have the following characteristics:

- *Incorporate multiple assessment measures*
- *Evaluate the process as well as the product*
- *Be available to the public*
- *Be designed by and tailored to the individual institution with the active involvement of faculty in both planning and implementation*
- *Based on the institutional mission*
- *Include assessment of the achievement of general education objectives by undergraduate students*

- *Include outcomes indicators such as:*

licensure and certification exams for institutional and program quality

employment rates for predominantly occupational programs

transfer and graduation rates

alumni satisfaction
- *Generate feedback reports to high schools on the performance of school graduates on basic skills tests, progress toward degree, and other measures.*

Assessment in Florida has been a continuing concern of the Commission. *The Master Plan for Florida Postsecondary Education* (1982) considered assessment in terms of educational quality and the need to strengthen educational performance and process. In its *Master Plan Update* (1988) the Commission continued to examine educational quality and the role of assessment. Reviewing the issue of student readiness and the statewide testing structure in the elementary and secondary sectors, the college entry-level tests, and the CLAST, the Commission questioned some aspects of the existing testing system. The Update recommended that the Department of Education review the various statewide assessment programs to determine if there was a well-integrated assessment system. A subsequent Department of Education report contained recommendations for improvements in Florida's Statewide Student Assessment Program, which encompassed elementary and secondary education, but it did not address postsecondary testing beyond noting that the recommended Grade Ten Assessment Test (GTAT) could be used to determine readiness for postsecondary education. In other assessment related areas, the Department has been reviewing the relationship between college preparatory instruction and CLAST as

well as the joint concerns of placement test appropriateness and minimum score levels. Another recommendation concerned general education and the need to assess the status of the general education curriculum. Finally, the Update recommended that the Board of Regents provide guidelines for each state university for the development of an outcome assessment program to be applied to a representative sample of its graduating classes.

Since the *Update*, the Commission has completed two reports concerning undergraduate education: *An Assessment of the General Education Curriculum in State Universities and Community Colleges* (1989) and *The Impact of Undergraduate Enhancement Funding* (1990). The first report provided a quantitative assessment of the degree of compliance with the general education curriculum requirements. Several recommendations were made to the institutions concerning areas such as students' compliance with Gordon Rule requirements and adequate preparation for the CLAST. The second report assessed several undergraduate enhancement efforts over a six-year period. In addressing future directions of undergraduate enhancement funding, the Commission noted that the appropriate focus of efforts to improve student achievement should be upon outcomes. The report concluded that the State should be provided with some measure of accountability as to the impact of enhancement funds.

Assessment Policies and Practices: National Overview

Substantial growth in student assessment activity has occurred at the institutional level, with an estimated 81 percent of colleges and universities doing some form of assessment compared with 55 percent in 1988 (American Council on Education, 1991). Ninety percent of two-year schools and 58 percent of doctoral universities report conducting assessment

activities. Assessment is also increasingly tied to the accreditation process. The assessment program components most frequently found are basic college readiness skills, career preparation/alumni follow-up, personal growth and development, general education/liberal studies, and major field of study (American Council on Education, 1991). A few colleges and universities are frequently cited as leaders in assessment to improve student learning at the institutional level. They include a range of institutions, from private liberal arts schools such as Alverno College (Wisconsin) and King's College (Pennsylvania) to larger public institutions such as Northeast Missouri State University and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Other institutions, particularly community colleges, have concentrated on institutional effectiveness and incorporating student assessment within overall effectiveness.

Assessment requirements at the state level vary considerably in scope and breadth. While there are commonalities across statewide assessment activities, individual state political and economic forces have helped shape variations in assessment policies. During the last half of the 1980s, several states moved to mandate some type of assessment or accountability plan which would be developed at the institutional level and submitted to a state agency. States such as Virginia have focused on student assessment, while the emphasis has been on the broader concept of institutional effectiveness in states such as Missouri, Colorado, Tennessee, South Carolina, Connecticut, and California (Community College System only). While many other states have not implemented a statewide assessment plan or report requirement, most states have other types of state-level reporting mandates that entail assessment. Entry-level testing in Georgia, New Jersey, and Florida are examples of very specific, targeted assessment activities that involve statewide data collection.

State assessment efforts must also be considered within the context of two new federal requirements. The Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 requires postsecondary institutions to disclose information for such areas as graduation rates and campus-based crimes. The second federal requirement concerns accreditation. Regional and specialized accrediting agencies are evaluated by the U.S. Department of Education on the basis of whether, in making their decisions on institutions or programs, the agencies systematically obtain or consider substantial and accurate information on the educational effectiveness of postsecondary educational institutions or programs. Two key criteria used by the Department of Education are (1) documentation of the educational achievements of students in verifiable and consistent ways, and (2) determination of the extent to which institutions or programs systematically apply information obtained on educational achievements to foster enhanced student achievement. Consequently, an institution must provide documentation to an accrediting body so that the accrediting body can in turn demonstrate to the federal government that it has complied with the federal criteria for recognition by the Department of Education.

Legislative action as well as governing and coordinating board activity in numerous states during the past decade signal widespread and deeply rooted concerns with quality, efficiency, and effectiveness in education. Assessment activity across the nation is diverse, yet it is also apparent that none of the states has been able to adequately address assessment issues. Implementing a comprehensive assessment policy requires cooperation and consensus among a state's legislature, coordinating or governing boards, and postsecondary institutions. Yet, the highly controversial nature of assessment has produced an adversarial milieu in some states.

As a result, the state boards and institutions have been unable to establish or maintain the collaborative environment needed to design statewide assessment policy. Some states have decided not to develop statewide policy or reporting requirements concerning accountability and assessment. Because of the enormity of assessment, a few states have concentrated on assessing only student performance. Also because of the breadth of assessment concerns, other states are phasing in assessment, requiring all public institutions to report on selected assessment components in one year, on other components during a second year, and on a third set of components in another year. Finally, assessment has become a dominant issue at a time when state economies are unable to sustain any additional allocations. While some states have moved forward with statewide assessment requirements and perhaps additional funding, other states have kept assessment conversations alive but have not mandated assessment. Although it is too early to determine what works and what does not work in state assessment-related policy, reports from states that have implemented such policies provide some indicators of satisfaction with their progress.

Colorado: As a result of legislation in 1985, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education developed a policy and procedure for public institutions to use in creating and implementing an accountability plan. In the latest accountability report, the Commission noted that, overall, institutional accountability efforts revealed better results than in the previous year's reports. For example, measurements of general education skills shifted from the first two years to the entire college experience, and more institutions developed general education measures for juniors and seniors. Assessment in the major field resulted in changes to curricula, course sequences, and teaching methods. The Commission concluded that if faculty and

institutions accept and use the process, assessment and accountability will be a viable process for the colleges and universities.

South Carolina: Legislation in 1988 called for an effective system of quality assessment by South Carolina institutions. The Commission on Higher Education's annual **Summary Report on Institutional Effectiveness** summarizes statewide progress in several effectiveness components and presents individual institutional reports on those components. The Commission reports that the institutional effectiveness program "has clearly proven itself a winner, not only for students, but also for the institutions themselves, South Carolina taxpayers and all potential employees."

Tennessee: Performance funding was implemented in Tennessee in 1976 to earmark additional funds for performance outcomes. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission reports that the performance funding program for higher education provided an additional \$17.6 million to the campuses in 1989-90. Among improvements associated with that funding are a higher percentage of accreditable programs that are accredited, more of the licensed and certified fields have their students passing their professional examination at rates exceeding the norm, and a steady rise in scores on a standardized examination of general education. Also, many campuses are using the results of assessment to develop more effective instructional programs.

In most states, development of effectiveness indicators for statewide use has been a collaborative effort with participation by institutional representatives as well as system-level and coordinating board staff. State-level requirements focus on general components or areas and indicators within each area (e.g., assessment of core requirements in general education) while the institutions or systemwide

boards identify the methodologies or strategies to measure the indicators and to evaluate performance for each component. The state higher education coordinating board usually approves institutional plans and the methodologies proposed.

Assessment Policies in Florida

There is a wide range of assessment activities taking place at the institutional and system level in Florida. Most of these activities are conducted because the faculty, programs, colleges, universities, and boards have a real desire to know how their students and institutions are performing. Florida has relatively few formal state-level assessment policies in place, but there are many practices. Current state-level outcomes assessment policies and practices for postsecondary education relating to (1) mandatory testing, (2) reporting requirements on student performance, (3) newly legislated accountability plans, and (4) program review requirements are discussed briefly below.

Mandatory testing - Assessment activities for student performance can take many forms--testing is one of them. Others include collections of works in portfolios for evaluation, interviews, and productions. Florida's assessment activities have focused on statewide testing. The State's testing program, supervised by the Department of Education (DOE), begins in the elementary grades. Statute calls for a statewide assessment program to provide information needed for the improvement of the public schools.

Mandatory statewide testing relevant to postsecondary education takes two forms: placement testing at entry-level and exit testing. Current state policy seeks "to assure that students moving from one level of education to the next have acquired competencies necessary for satisfactory

performance at that level" (Section 229.053(2)(c), F.S.). This passage suggests the need for two important points at which students should demonstrate a minimum degree of competency: prior to graduation from high school and prior to entry to upper division postsecondary instruction. Outcomes measures are essential in order to assure that students moving from one level are adequately prepared to perform satisfactorily at the next level. In terms of the competencies needed to move from high school to postsecondary education, the State requires placement tests upon admission to a public college or university. The large number of recent high school graduates who score below minimum levels on one or more of the placement subtests indicates that many high school students have not acquired the competencies necessary for satisfactory performance at the next level of education. Entry-level testing is included here because it is a major assessment activity for postsecondary education, but it is not an outcomes assessment measure for colleges and universities.

The second important juncture at which students should demonstrate competency for progression is for admission to the upper division of a public university. The College-level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) is used as an outcomes measure for computation and communication skills at this point. Cohort studies reveal that over 90 percent of the students who take the examination eventually pass all four subtests. The CLAST must be considered a postsecondary education outcomes measure for computation and communication skills since awarding of the associate in arts degree and progression to upper division instruction are dependent on successful completion of this examination. But there has been much concern throughout the State for a number of years with the level of skill proficiency required to pass the four CLAST subtests.

Reporting requirements - A second type of assessment policy encompasses reporting requirements on student performance. Although these policies do not necessarily produce an assessment, they generate information flow that is important to assessment activities. Various statutes and rules mandate reporting to assist in assessing student performance in such areas as:

(1) *Preparation for postsecondary education* - Section 240.118, F.S., and State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.038, FAC, requires each public college, university, and vocational school to report to the Commission of Education on the performance of each first-time-in- college student from each public high school. The report must include performance on both regular and preparatory courses or programs and indicate students referred for remediation.

(2) *Articulation* - Section 240.209, F.S. requires the Board of Regents to report annually, for each limited access program by institution, race, and gender, specified information on applicants accepted and applicants denied admission. Also each of the reporting categories must be reported by type of student. Section 240.311(3)(h)(2), F.S., requires the State Board of Community Colleges to annually report student follow-up information which includes the success of graduates in upper-division university programs.

(3) *Underprepared university freshmen* - State Board of Education Rule 6C-6.002(3)(c) allows universities to admit students not meeting Board of Regents minimum entrance requirements. The institutions must prepare an individual learning plan for each student and submit an annual follow-up report on the success of those students.

(4) *Student progress* - each sector board is required in statute to establish and maintain

an effective information system to provide composite data about the college or university system and assure that special analyses and studies of the colleges and universities are conducted.

(5) *State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.030, FAC, also known as the Gordon Rule, requires coursework rather than testing as an assessment procedure. Before receipt of an AA degree or prior to entry into the upper division of a state university, students must successfully complete 12 semester hours of English coursework where they are required to demonstrate writing skills by producing work totaling 24,000 words. Additionally, six semester hours of mathematics coursework in algebra-level work or higher is required.*

Accountability plans - The 1991 Legislature passed benchmark accountability legislation for postsecondary education as well as for the public schools. The Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges established task forces to draft plans. For the Division of Public Schools, the Legislature created a new advisory body, the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability, to develop recommendations on school improvement and accountability. (Sections 240.214 and 240.324, F.S., concerning State University System and Community College System accountability are reproduced in Appendices A and B.) Briefly, the SUS accountability process should:

- Provide for systematic, ongoing evaluation of quality and effectiveness in the system.
- Monitor performance in instruction, research, and public service yet recognize institutional missions.
- Produce systemwide performance standards and goals for each standard.

- *Evaluate the production of classroom contact hours.*
- *Produce an accountability plan which includes, at a minimum, data on selected performance standards.*
- *Provide for an annual report on implementation of performance standards and achievement of goals during the prior year and initiatives to be undertaken during the next year.*

The statute for the SUS also directs the Office of the Auditor General to assess the accountability plan and the BOR to annually evaluate the performance of the Chancellor and the state university presidents in achieving the performance goals established in the plan.

Language in the Community College System accountability legislation is slightly different in that the Legislature calls for a management and accountability process that provides for the systematic, ongoing improvement and assessment of the improvement of the quality and efficiency of the CCS. The State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) and the community college boards of trustees submitted a plan to improve and evaluate the instructional and administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

The SBCC must also submit an annual report on the results of initiatives taken during the prior year and the initiatives and related objective performance measures proposed for the next year. Finally, the achievement of performance goals established in the plan must be addressed as part of the SBCC's annual performance evaluation of the executive director and as part of the boards of trustees' annual evaluation of the presidents.

Program review - Program review is perceived as a form of assessment for both institutional and system purposes. The

purposes of program review are varied: to distribute resources, to expand, reduce, or eliminate a program, to evaluate program quality, to compare programs within an institution or a system, and to address other specific issues. Florida's public colleges and universities are required in law to review each major program every five years or whenever the effectiveness or efficiency of a program is jeopardized. Outcomes as well as input and process information should be collected and analyzed for program reviews. The SUS program review process provides for a statewide review of these data for each program approximately every five years through a formal program review. The Community College System collects and reviews program data annually. The Division of Vocational, Adult and Community Education has different review processes and schedules for vocational, supplemental, and adult education programs.

Accreditation - Assessment and accreditation have been linked for some years, although the linkage until recently was very focused rather than comprehensive. While accrediting bodies have historically examined or assessed a variety of factors, emphasis was usually placed on easily quantifiable elements such as the physical plant, fiscal resources, and number of faculty members. For years accreditation assumed a high, positive correlation between inputs (e.g., the number of volumes in the library, the percent of faculty with doctoral degrees, the student-faculty ratio) and a quality educational experience. Many educators and others have questioned these assumptions, finding little research to support the relationship between commonly used accrediting criteria such as financial resources and library/learning centers and institutional quality.

The assessment of outcomes gained momentum among regional accrediting associations in recent years. Specialized

accrediting groups, however, examined outcomes assessment early in their history. Since licensure is mandatory for the practice of many professions, the specialized accrediting associations have for several years required programs and institutions to report information such as pass rates on licensure examinations and placement in discipline-related jobs as part of the accreditation criteria. Now all of the regional associations assess outcomes but not necessarily the same kinds of outcomes. For example, SACS and the Western Association emphasize institutional effectiveness, while North Central Association is focusing on student academic achievement. In its publication *Criteria for Accreditation*, SACS states:

The quality of education provided by member institutions is the primary consideration in the decision to confer or reaffirm accreditation... Traditionally, accreditation has focused attention almost exclusively upon institutional resources and process... The level of institutional quality depends not only on an institution's educational processes and resources but also on the institution's successful use of those processes and resources to achieve established goals. Institutions have an obligation to all constituents to evaluate effectiveness and to use the results in a broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation process (p. 13).

SACS requires each institution "to state its expectations regarding the important results of the educational process and then to describe the methods that will be used in discovering the extent to which those expectations are realized" (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1989, p. 4).

The move by regional accrediting bodies to increase emphasis on outcomes as part of the accrediting process resulted at least in part from state-level requirements for public institutions to develop outcomes assessment

measures and report on their results. Additionally, since 1988 U.S. Department of Education rules for recognition of accrediting bodies have utilized evaluation criteria that are outcomes-focused. Revised federal regulations have placed greater emphasis on the "consistent assessment of documentable student achievements as a principal element in the accreditation process." (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 33909).

Enhancement Funding - State legislatures have historically used a variety of approaches to appropriate funding to postsecondary institutions--beyond the base funding provided annually--in order for the institutions to further selected goals with the additional state dollars. For the purposes of this paper, these special appropriations will be referred to generally as enhancement funding. Such targeted dollars in the state higher education budget have been used to advance many different kinds of state and/or institutional goals, including increasing racial/ethnic and gender minority participation and retention, improving student services, and enhancing the quality of undergraduate education. State legislatures have supported priority goals in postsecondary education predominantly through: (a) categorical funding, (b) performance or incentive funding, and (c) competitive grants.

As other states, Florida has endorsed several specific statewide goals and dedicated funding for the achievement of those goals. There is a vast array of special category appropriations in the postsecondary budgets of the Department of Education. An example of categorical funding for Florida's universities is the Quality Improvement Program (QIP), which can be traced to 1974. Examples of other categorical appropriations in recent years include such diverse areas as the Magnet Laboratory at Florida State University, auxiliary learning aids for handicapped students in postsecondary institutions, and

special appropriations to the Southeastern University of the Health Sciences for students in pharmacy, osteopathy, and optometry. Florida has utilized performance/incentive funding as a form of enhancement to a lesser degree than categorical funding. Challenge grants are a form of incentive funding and include the Eminent Scholars Program and the Facility Enhancement Challenge Grant Program. Competitive grants allow the State to provide fiscal support only to those institutions that meet specific criteria, usually defined through a proposal process, associated with a particular program. Examples of competitive funding include the College Reach-Out Program to increase the participation of racial/ethnic minorities in postsecondary education, the Sunshine State Skills Program among the community colleges to support training programs, and Undergraduate Enhancement Grants.

Conclusion

Although assessment has been a factor in higher education for some time and has found sponsorship at the state and system levels, it has settled into a restless state on campuses. Observers suggest that campus discomfort with assessment has resulted because assessment goes to the heart of academia through the institutional structure and the ways of academic life. Assessment asserts faculty and institutional responsibility for student learning (Hutchings and Marchese, 1990). It assumes that good teaching is student learning and that there is a shared responsibility to make that learning happen. Many faculty believe their autonomy is threatened by the tasks and processes inherent in assessment. State-mandated assessment has been perceived as "somebody else's test" for "somebody else's agenda" for student learning. Thus, faculty consider assessment as an infringement on their domain--the classroom, the curricula, and instruction. Also, the existing reward structures in most

colleges and universities are not compatible with assessment. Finally, the assessment movement may antagonize tensions between campuses and the statehouse and raise questions about "whose agenda" higher education will serve.

While assessment is not a perfect art, it is a necessary activity. Assessment at the course and program level with results filed in the academic department is not sufficient. As in other states, Florida's citizens want to know what their return on investment in postsecondary education is. But assessment solely for accountability purposes will not quiet the discomfort on the campuses, and it will not convince faculty and administrators to move beyond a compliance attitude. The Commission endorses the concept of assessment as a means rather than as an end in itself. As suggested by the Education Commission of the States, assessment "should be an integral part of an institution's strategy to improve teaching and learning and of the state's strategy to monitor the effectiveness of its system of higher education" (1986, p. 6). The chapter which follows addresses several assessment issues in an attempt to understand some of the concerns surrounding assessment from both the State and the institutional perspective.

III. ASSESSMENT IN FLORIDA: A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

This study was influenced by recurrent concerns identified by Commissioners and corroborated by consultants from business and industry as well as education. Over a series of several public meetings, representatives from various sectors presented their views of the initial focus of this study, outcomes assessment; additionally, these individuals raised significant points on other issues also of concern to Commissioners, including the quality of education, delivery of postsecondary education, and service to external constituencies.

A notable point made by Dr. Thomas Land from Motorola Incorporated summarizes a central problem in higher education: industry has experienced a paradigm shift--it could not survive in an environment responsive to an era that existed twenty years ago--but postsecondary education has not yet made that shift. Education must change in order to serve its customers just as business and industry have had to change. Dr. Land proposed several areas for change: from being very labor intensive to technology intensive, from a tenure process driven by research and publication to a process driven through teaching, from a norm-based assessment process to one that is criterion based, and from knowledge orientation to skill oriented and performance based. He described business in general as a dissatisfied customer because the postsecondary system is not fulfilling its teaching mission as perceived by industry: (1) develop students who are socially responsible in a political environment, (2) students who are employable in the workplace of tomorrow, and (3) students who are capable of lifelong learning. Perhaps higher education has not identified its multiple customers carefully and affirmed that it is serving the needs of those customers.

The efficiency and effectiveness of any enterprise, whether a business operation or a higher education institution, is dependent upon a clear identification of the customers served, an understanding of how the enterprise can best serve the needs of those customers, and a commitment to serve them. Educational institutions have multiple customers, including students, with their various interests and goals, business/industry, government, private associations, and the citizenry of the State. Balancing diverse interests of these groups in the best of times is challenging. Additionally, different institutional missions would produce somewhat different combinations of "priority" customers. Nonetheless, it is incumbent on each governing board to ensure that institutional missions are carefully defined. The institution must then develop, consonant with the mission statement, the best possible match between its customers and its resources.

Industry should acknowledge as well that it has not articulated clearly its requirements to postsecondary education. Many educational programs and disciplines do not have a clear sense of the specific concerns or the level of satisfaction with higher education that exists among business and industry. Educators testified that business and industry are not very specific about their goals; upper level managers request liberal arts graduates while personnel managers are interested in highly specific skills. The postsecondary education sector as well as some industry representatives noted that business and industry have not identified standards of what they expect from the postsecondary system, and industry has not collaborated as partners in the process of full customer satisfaction. Nationally, the SCANS report from the U.S. Department of Labor has focused attention on industry's needs for the K-12 sector. If that document is not applicable to the postsecondary sector, then collaborative education/industry efforts

should be made in Florida to address the joint issues of industry's concerns and expectations.

The previous chapter summarized existing policies and procedures related to assessment. This chapter focuses on major concerns that were stipulated in proviso or which emerged during preparation of the study. The information below responds to proviso for this study, but the discussion is framed within the context of the need for re-examination of several issues and assumptions about the State's postsecondary system. The issue areas raised in the following sections serve as examples of the need to refocus education to better respond to its many constituencies. As noted in Chapter I, two levels of concern run through the following sections. The first level involves identifying the key issues to be measured for assessment, while the second level relates to determining how well institutions perform against these issues.

State Goals and Institutional Effectiveness

A primary area of interest in this review of outcomes assessment involved state goals and institutional effectiveness. Goals express what the State and its institutions value. Assessment allows the State and the institutions to determine how well they have achieved the goals they value. Existing policy indicates that the mission of Florida's system of postsecondary education is:

to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses, and to serve and stimulate society by developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities; scientific, professional, and technological expertise; and a sense of purpose. (Section 240.105(2), F.S.)

In a general statement, these are the areas that the State values. Yet, Florida does not have

a comprehensive state-level policy on outcomes assessment which also identifies the rationale for assessment. Consequently, there are no established goals to determine if the postsecondary system is fulfilling its mission. Florida's history with assessment has been characterized by fragmented efforts that may or may not be pulled together at the institutional or state-level to assess educational outcomes. While there are many assessment initiatives in place, they are not part of a well-designed, comprehensive assessment master plan to examine performance and act on the assessment information in order to promote improvement. Beyond the CLAST examination for rising juniors and associate in arts graduates, the State has assumed that individual institutions assess some kinds of student outcomes, particularly in knowledge and skills areas, through coursework, program completion, graduation, and performance on professional examinations. The State has also assumed that lessons learned from these assessment activities are evaluated for institutional improvement purposes because courses, programs, and institutions are dynamic and evolving--that assessment experiences confirm excellence or provide information on which to base changes that will move the institution toward excellence. It is not clear, however, that comprehensive, timely assessment is occurring on a continuing basis. Nor is it clear that institutions are fully utilizing the information they generate to support improvement. Without a clear institutional plan to assess progress in terms of its mission and goals, neither the institution nor the State has a firm basis for evaluating the quality of postsecondary education in Florida.

The Commission understands that assessing outcomes in higher education is a difficult task. Among the reasons for this difficulty are "mission drift" or an institution's losing sight of its mission and attempting to be all things to all people; the reluctance of

postsecondary institutions to accept externally imposed accountability mandates and prescribed performance measures; "output creep" -- a shift "in higher education's output mix toward more of what faculty want to produce as opposed to what payers want to buy" (Massy, 1991) or from what consumers want to what faculty want; lack of consensus among and within institutions on basic assessment questions; and inadequate resources to conduct assessment. Concurrently, it appears that there have been few incentives for institutions to want to closely examine their missions and goals against their progress and achievements. The recent surge of interest by regional accrediting associations in institutional effectiveness and assessment and legislative accountability mandates are very recent examples of external incentives to which institutions may respond with some self-evaluation activities. But until these external pressures increased during the past few years, few colleges and universities invested in meaningful mission and goal exploration.

Given the need of the Legislature and the general public for an accountability process, as well as the postsecondary institutions' interest in information that will serve their self-evaluation and improvement needs, state policy for postsecondary education should provide for assessment that is institutionally focused and comprehensive. It is not enough, however, to simply say that colleges and universities should evaluate themselves. Accountability legislation enacted in 1991 clearly indicates that plans and annual reports on selected measures are needed. Existing legislation provides a good foundation for building a comprehensive plan to assess institutional effectiveness. A comprehensive state assessment policy could serve several objectives (Education Commission of the States, 1991):

- *Send institutions a clear message about priorities,*
- *Enable campuses to revitalize curriculum and teaching practices,*
- *Establish appropriate standards for student achievement,*
- *Inform state planning and budgeting decisions.*

As discussed earlier in this report, the mechanics of assessment should serve as a means to an end. Assessment that is purposeful should enhance our understanding of the kind of student learning occurring on our campuses, should indicate the efficiency of institutional operations, and should ultimately lead to improved quality of education. As suggested by a consultant for this study, measuring an area such as student performance is important, but it may be better to measure what is known about institutional behavior that leads to better student performance. A comprehensive assessment plan which supports institutional effectiveness would have the following characteristics:

- *Be based on the institution's mission;*
- *Encompass both efficiency and effectiveness measures;*
- *Examine input, process, and output or outcome variables;*
- *Be systematic by providing routinely collected and analyzed information;*
- *Involve a variety of quantitative and qualitative measurements collected over time;*
- *Allow for comparison of an institution's current and past performance, for comparisons among Florida institutions*

and with peer institutions, as well as for comparison against predetermined goals.

- *Be useful for planning at program, institutional, system, and state levels;*

- *Encourage faculty, student, staff, and community participation;*

Comparability and consistency in assessment activities are important from the institutional, the system, and the State perspective. Students as well as the State, business, and industry need specific performance areas that are common to all public institutions and measured in the same ways. Establishing comparable measures will allow all interested persons to relate programs and institutions on the characteristics and outcomes important to those individuals. The general public should have that opportunity. Consequently, in addition to identifying common characteristics of a comprehensive plan to assess institutional effectiveness, the Commission believes it important to address the components or areas that all colleges and universities should assess as they evaluate their effectiveness and efficiency. All institutions should establish goals for, and include components to assess effectiveness, in at least the following areas:

- *General Education*
- *Instruction*
- *Access and Equity*
- *Retention*
- *Performance of Student Athletes*
- *Performance of Graduates*
- *Faculty*
- *Majors*

- *Facilities Utilization*

- *Administration*

- *Research*

- *Public Service*

In order to maximize institutional effectiveness information and attain state quality goals, each institution should have an assessment program plan that addresses its effectiveness components. An assessment plan should clearly reflect the institution's mission and goals, explain existing and projected assessment activities and procedures, identify assessment methods, and explain follow-up activities to utilize assessment for improved institutional effectiveness. Assessment plans should incorporate a variety of perspectives and multiple measures to avoid a dependence on performance indicators that are predominantly quantitative in nature. Such a plan would evaluate the educational process as well as the product.

Tying assessment to goals should encourage institutions to use assessment information to improve courses, programs, and services as well as to increase efficiency. Assessing institutional effectiveness thus becomes a dynamic process related to other on-going institutional activities. Colleges and universities normally collect information concerning the components cited above from a wide variety of sources in response to several internal and external demands. The 1991 accountability legislation identifies specific measures for most of the components. For example, all state universities and the community colleges must report on student progression, which will provide information relevant to the retention component. (See Appendix C for a comparison of the effectiveness components listed above and current university and community college accountability requirements.) Additionally,

several other current reporting requirements for the state colleges and universities will provide some of the data needed to evaluate the components. Also, cyclical activities such as program review and accreditation examine most of the components enumerated above. Regional accreditation criteria, for example, include an evaluation of the effectiveness of undergraduate curriculum. Thus, all institutions engage in numerous tasks that routinely generate data for new and recurring activities.

In sum, a comprehensive effectiveness approach would integrate data and analyses from a wide variety of sources to relate institutional performance to institutional mission and State goals. Compiling this information annually would provide the institutions with the kinds of information needed for other periodic--but not necessarily annual--activities such as program review and accreditation. In practice, state-level program review every three, five, or seven years and regional accreditation every ten years should both become much easier for an institution to manage. As important ancillary activities for the college or university, program review and accreditation should evolve into opportunities for the institution to demonstrate to external agencies how it utilizes its resources to continually strive toward excellence in the fulfillment of its mission. While state policy which calls for comprehensive assessment of institutional effectiveness may result in some colleges and universities needing to augment their information collection and analysis activities, such a policy would also capitalize on existing efforts, thus increasing efficiency by consolidating and utilizing information preparation that occurs at the program, department, college, and institution level for multiple reporting requirements. Additionally, related reporting activities required at the state level might be eliminated to reduce the reporting burdens of the institutions and the state boards.

State policy which focuses on assessment for institutional effectiveness purposes may respond more fully to both the State's need for accountability information and the institutions' need for developmental or improvement information. Emphasizing institutional effectiveness would embrace administrative as well as teaching/learning areas. Most importantly, since evaluation of institutional effectiveness is dependent upon institutional mission and goals, results of this broad-based assessment should provide the kinds of data and analyses required to understand the level of quality present in the individual institution and, in the aggregate, in the State's postsecondary education system.

Data and supporting narrative submitted by the institutions should be compiled at the state level to produce a comprehensive overview of the status of systemwide and state goals. Broad dissemination of the results of a composite effectiveness report should ensure that the general public has access to the information. To achieve this, it may be necessary to publish selected indicators or measures and progress toward achieving goals related to those measures in such publications as the institutional catalog and the counseling manual.

Quality of Education

A second major area of concern identified during the study was quality in postsecondary education. In the 1982 *Master Plan for Florida Postsecondary Education*, the Commission emphasized that the highest priority for the State should be improving the quality of postsecondary education institutions and programs. A statement from the *Master Plan* relating priorities and resources is as significant today as it was ten years ago:

Whatever structural or managerial changes or new academic programs emerge in the future will do so in the context of limited state

resources and competing social and economic priorities. The next two decades, therefore, pose old and new dangers for postsecondary education. Yet they also offer strong hopes. The strongest of these is to coordinate all the educational resources of the State and bring them to bear upon appropriate access and high quality achieved with affordable investment.

Florida law establishes the primacy of quality in education: "The Legislature finds it in the public interest to provide a system of higher education which is of the highest possible quality..." (Section 240.105(1), Florida Statutes). A "system of higher education which is of the highest possible quality" is reached when individual institutions demonstrate excellence in achieving their unique missions.

The term "quality" has been used in many different ways, and there is no standard definition widely accepted by the educational community. Use of the word "quality", however, often evokes perceptions of elitism and selectivity. When speaking of educational institutions, quality has often been associated with selected "ivy league" or "top ranked" institutions across the nation. It is important to distinguish between quality in terms of an institution's effectively fulfilling its mission, while making the best use of its resources, versus the concept of prestige, which relates to an institution's ability to garner resources. This report does not attempt to define quality; it also does not want to suggest that the only indicator of quality is a favorable comparison with the ivy league schools or with institutions someone, somehow has identified as "quality" colleges and universities. Excellence is possible in the diverse postsecondary education institutions--encompassing research and comprehensive universities, community colleges, and vocational/technical centers--that the State now enjoys and wishes to encourage.

Quality may be discussed in terms of how to measure it. Traditional measures of institutional quality include such areas as the proportion of faculty with doctoral degrees, admission scores on standardized tests, expenditures per student, and library holdings. A major shortcoming of traditional measures is that none of these indices address the educational process--what happens to students during their educational experience--nor the outcome of the process. Consequently, at the state level there is little information disseminated that indicates how well the educational process works nor how the students have improved as a result of their college and university experience. As suggested by David Benson, President of Sonoma State University in California, "We must change the basic paradigms of what we believe about higher education and how we look at a college degree.... We must better define ourselves by the skills, the concepts, and the understanding that our students have mastered, not by what we think we have taught them in a certain temporal sequence" (1992).

Teaching is closely linked to quality since a quality educational system should enhance learning. Research has shown that student learning is a function of several conditions, many of which are institutionally controlled. Numerous factors may promote student learning, including individual student ability and motivation, properly prepared and dedicated faculty, adequate physical facilities, and appropriate learning materials. Among these factors, faculty play a critical role in enhancing student learning. Teaching at the undergraduate level is a major element of Florida's public postsecondary education system: "the Legislature finds it in the public interest to provide a system of higher education...which stresses undergraduate teaching as its main priority" (Section

240.105(1), F.S.). Assessing teaching and rewarding good teaching are important parts of a comprehensive strategy to positively impact student learning. Monetary awards are short-term rewards to recognize excellence in teaching, and the Legislature in recent years has allocated monies for a competitive grant process to reward outstanding undergraduate teaching in the State University System.

The current focus both nationally and at the state level on research is an example of the embedded structural practices in postsecondary education that are very resistant to change. Long-term efforts to recognize teaching excellence would necessitate changes in the reward structure at the institutional level--changes in the tenure granting and promotion structure where faculty are rewarded for outstanding teaching as they are for outstanding research and publication. Nationally, efforts to address changes in the reward structure are underway at individual institutions as well as at a system level. A new study conducted for the University of California system recommended that more attention be paid to teaching, professional activity, and public service since these activities more broadly support the university's mission than does an emphasis on research. Another approach would be to allow faculty to concentrate on different types of activities at different times in their careers. A third alternative would be to vary faculty tasks according to an individual's interests and abilities.

The Commission also continues to be very concerned with a related faculty issue, the quality and quantity of productivity. Teaching, research, and public service are all important functions of our public postsecondary institutions and recognized elements in Florida's higher education policy. Current state-level data collecting activities and accountability indicators, however, do not adequately measure the distribution of faculty

time nor the quality of faculty activity within instructional and noninstructional duties. Performance indicators are needed that will show not only the level of faculty productivity in terms of credit hours, but also such concerns as the productivity of research faculty, the level of efficiency from faculty activity, and the proportional distribution of faculty time across instruction research, and public service. Although faculty activity data are now collected at the systems level, these data are self-reported and difficult to verify. An alternative reporting process is needed to help substantiate and clarify faculty productivity information. In the absence of such information, the proportion of faculty time dedicated to teaching, research, and public service cannot be clearly ascertained. Consequently, changes in the faculty reward structure are unlikely. Assessing faculty productivity is an important ingredient in the overall evaluation of the quality as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education. Relative to these concerns, the Auditor General's Office recently recommended that an accountability process for faculty activities be established for the State University System (Office of the Auditor General, 1991).

Student learning is another major emphasis in assessing the quality of education. The Commission believes that a quality learning experience is definable and measurable. Thus, quality student learning can be characterized by attributes or "good things that happen" during the college experience that promote learning and human development. Several points or principles for good practice in undergraduate education are enumerated in Table 1 and may serve as a beginning--a foundation from which administrators and faculty can examine undergraduate education on their campuses. Determining the degree to which each principle is present in the undergraduate experience is an institutional responsibility.

This list is not intended as exhaustive, but as a starting point. Each principle is accompanied by examples for measuring each variable since several types of activities can be used to measure the principles. To illustrate, educational researchers have identified "frequency of student-faculty contact" as a fundamental component of a good undergraduate educational experience. This variable should be of particular interest to the department chair as well as to the individual faculty member at the course level. To evaluate the frequency of student-faculty contact for a specific course, an instructor could survey students in the class to determine, on average, how often each student spoke with the instructor in class as well as out of class. Also, the faculty member could review the proportion of his/her office hours spent working with students versus the time dedicated to class preparation, committee work, or other activities. The instructor would also need to identify other types of student interaction activities such as mentoring sessions, extracurricular events, and special projects. Conditions such as the location and accessibility of faculty offices (near to or distant from classrooms and lecture halls) and class size may also impact the amount and quality of contact.

Assessing both student learning and teaching includes examining traditional educational methodology as well as more recent developments involving the use of technology. The introduction of technology in the teaching/learning process has produced additional assessment concerns since recognized assessment strategies for classroom learning may not apply to technology in teaching and learning. Assessment must consider the special characteristics of technology in evaluating both teaching and learning. Technology has expanded access to postsecondary education, and assessment practices must apply appropriate measures. For example, conventional assessment

approaches to examine student/faculty contact may not be appropriate for distance learning technology. Likewise, assessing student performance on work in a chemistry laboratory may be different if the student conducts experiments through video technology rather than through a hands-on laboratory setting.

The State and its higher education institutions should strive to create an assessment process that supports and encourages a high quality postsecondary education system. Such a postsecondary education system is characterized by excellence in its various parts--instruction, research, service. The Commission believes that principles of good learning such as those enumerated above are fundamental to a quality undergraduate learning experience. Information received from the industry sector for this study suggests a very positive relationship between its needs and the principles. A recent report from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), identifies foundation skills that high school students should develop: five basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics, listening, and speaking) as well as thinking skills and personal qualities. The SCANS Report is being used by the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability and should also be useful at the postsecondary level because standards are required to prepare all students either for the workforce or for college-level work. This approach also reflects a concept previously endorsed by the Commission that education is "all one system" rather than two or three related but disjointed systems. As suggested by Dr. Aims McGuinness from the Education Commission of the States during public hearings for this study, Florida should question what the relationship is between the skills identified in the SCANS report and the undergraduate learning experience. When incorporated into undergraduate education,

principles of good practice should contribute to an exceptional student learning experience and, in turn, support a total quality educational experience. Institutional assessment of each principle should contribute toward improving student learning.

Student performance is another important aspect of the quality of education. Evaluating student learning at the institutional level is a necessary companion activity with measuring student outcomes and setting goals to improve student performance. An objective assessment of student learning would guide activities to enhance student learning. Assessing student performance through outcomes has been a major focus of many state and institutional assessment efforts. Student outcomes measures can involve knowledge, skills, behavior, and attitudes or values. Historically, widespread emphasis has been on knowledge and skills. For example, Florida's College-level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) is designed to measure students' computation and communication skills through multiple choice questions and essay composition. State and national licensure examinations also measure student outcomes in a specific discipline. Other widely recognized student outcomes measures are the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and performance on professional qualifying examinations such as the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).

A state-level resource that is developing a data base on postsecondary students and their job performance is the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program. This Department of Education office annually surveys Florida employers to obtain indicators of their satisfaction with selected aspects of workforce preparation in Florida, particularly those areas that are vocational oriented. Survey responses primarily reflect employer opinions regarding the general education skills and specific vocational skills and competencies

that their newly hired employees brought to the job regardless of where they were trained. Survey findings in recent years show that employers are satisfied with the occupationally-specific skill preparation of employees but dissatisfied with basic skill preparation--mathematics, reading, and communication skills. Additionally, a number of respondents have commented that employees lack the rudiments of the "work ethic": inability to take direction, do not show up for work or arrive on time, dress inappropriately, do not take pride in their work, and do not work well with others. This year's findings "reinforce previous implications that as the requirements for employment in an occupation become more specific and precisely defined the better the education system is able to provide appropriate training" (Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program, 1991, p. ii). While the current surveys reflect primarily vocational preparation, expansion in this research to include graduates of other degree programs will provide much needed assessment information from the business sector on the quality of education.

Value-added assessment has been used in many institutions to measure change in student performance over time. Value-added is a controversial outcomes assessment approach which ideally indicates the effect of institutional influence on students, but realistically is extremely difficult to assess beyond single courses or programs. While individual institutions may choose to include value-added assessment in their student outcomes activities, requiring value-added assessment through state policy is not recommended at this time.

TABLE 1

MEASURING GOOD PRACTICES IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

<u>Recommended Process Variables</u>	<u>Examples for Measuring the Variables</u>
1) Student-faculty contact	● Frequency of contact during class and out of class through office hours (student and faculty surveys and interviews); mentoring; extracurricular activities; special projects; location of faculty offices; class size.
2) Cooperation among students	● Existence of group assignments and projects; teaching techniques that utilize discussion and group interaction.
3) Active learning	● Amount of class discussion vs. lecture; type and amount of written work; problem solving; use of synthesis, evaluation, and analysis skills; appropriate use of technology.
4) Prompt feedback	● Frequency of evaluated work (assignments and examinations); length of time to return materials to students.
5) Time on task	● Level of work required for successful completion of a project, class, etc.; type, amount, and level of performance required.
6) High expectations	● Level of performance on coursework and types of courses in a program; level of skills (analysis, evaluation, synthesis vs. repetition); policies on pass requirements.
7) Respect for diverse talents and ways of learning	● Learning experiences that consider both dependent and independent cognitive styles; policies on flexibility in course scheduling.
8) Coherent curriculum	● Degree of interdisciplinary coursework and programs; interrelatedness of courses; course structure as well as course sequencing.
9) Synthesizing experiences	● Examples of coursework or independent projects that draw on experience as well as knowledge and skills from several courses; "capstone" activities such as a senior thesis.
10) Integrating education and experience	● Opportunities for internships or other types of external learning experiences associated with class experiences; examples of a blend of theory and practice in teaching/learning.
11) Ongoing practice of learned skills	● Evidence of basic skills (reading, writing, math) used throughout the college experience.

Source: *The Wingspread Journal*, 9(2). The Johnson Foundation.
 Jones, D.P. and Ewell, P. T. (1991, July 24). *The Effect of State Policy on Undergraduate Education*.
 Draft document prepared for the Education Commission of the States. Boulder, CO: National Center for
 Higher Education Management Systems.

Enhancement Funding

Fiscal resources to encourage and support institutional effectiveness marked a third focal point of Commission concern. Experiences in other states as well as comments from postsecondary administrators in Florida institutions indicate that assessment activities have associated costs. A few states have provided additional base funding to help support such costs. Other states have provided fiscal support through enhancement funding of competitive grants and performance funding. Some states have mandated assessment but have not increased funding support. The national trend to provide minimal support, if any, for assessment reflects the view that such activities should be conducted as part of the normal educational process, and they should not be "add-on" activities.

Assessment activities and effectiveness reporting can be supported through the related activities of program review and accreditation. Nonetheless, it is in the State's interest to encourage institutions to implement special projects that are innovative or exploratory that they otherwise may not be able to afford. Provision for additional fiscal support through enhancement funding for innovative programs that focus on improving institutional effectiveness is an appropriate way to channel support to institutions for such special projects. Enhancement funding vis a vis incentive (performance) funding and competitive grants would provide the flexibility and oversight for support that targets institutional effectiveness. Enhancement funding opportunities should build in program evaluation characteristics in order to determine the extent to which the State's goals were achieved with the money appropriated. An associated dilemma is the understanding that goal achievement may take many years. Long- and short-term goal setting may be needed, and accountability for

the enhancement funding developed accordingly.

A primary policy issue is the identification of state priorities related to outcomes assessment. In the past, several areas of major state concern were identified, and enhancement funding was appropriated for postsecondary education. Examples of these areas included undergraduate education, teacher education, racial/ethnic minority participation and retention, and academic excellence. Once priorities have been established, a decision can be made on the enhancement funding mechanisms most appropriate to assist the institutions in achieving the State's goals. Imbedded in this decision is the question of excellence versus equality. Should funding be awarded in order to assist selected institutional programs achieving or maintaining excellence in the targeted activity or should funding be distributed equally among qualifying institutions? Should funds be dedicated to weaker institutions in order to assist them in achieving excellence? In light of the current and projected constrained budget situation, the Commission believes that these additional resources should be focused on projects that will advance the State's goals toward excellence.

Program Review and Accreditation

A final concern for this study involved program review and assessment. Florida public colleges and universities engage in ongoing activities at several levels that should support an assessment plan and institutional effectiveness, thus reducing the financial impact of assessment. Accreditation and program review are two significant campus activities that are highly related to assessment. Program review is a cyclical activity occurring periodically but rarely annually on a comprehensive basis. Nonetheless, the reviews produce analyses that are important planning tools at both the local and the state

level. The initial stages of a review, during preparation of the self-study, furnish an appropriate and timely opportunity for faculty to address effectiveness questions by exploring such areas as how student learning is assessed, how program effectiveness is measured, how program quality is determined, and how previous assessment results have been used to effect program improvements.

Program review is an assessment activity which allows for concentrated attention to majors and the relationship of the curriculum to State needs. Yet, the Commission received testimony that program review teams, especially in the State University System, rarely include practitioners as consultants because faculty from the academic programs under review prefer peer academicians. This is not a compelling argument to exclude representatives from the private or practitioner sector from involvement in the program review process. Another major weakness in existing program review activities that the Commission has identified in the past is the absence of information from employers related to labor market needs and the performance of employees who graduated from the programs under review. Finally, program review activities should stimulate dissemination of assessment results and provide a forum for collective discussion of information gathered through continuous assessment projects. Again, however, the Commission has found few instances of follow-up action to recommendations in review reports and no mechanisms to address recommendations except through the budget process.

Regional accreditation and specialized accreditation are also related to assessment and evaluation of institutional effectiveness. Actions taken in the 1980s by the regional accrediting associations, particularly the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS), to strengthen criteria concerning assessment have encouraged postsecondary

institutions to evaluate their effectiveness and incorporate assessment information in planning and evaluation activities. Regional accreditation should provoke questions about the appropriateness of the general education core, the mix of courses and programs provided, and service to the community. Institutional accrediting associations have not demonstrated success, however, in producing substantial change based on their accrediting reports.

Program review and accreditation activities now conducted are an integral part of institutions' assessment and evaluation activities. But beyond annual data collection by the community colleges for Level I reviews, neither program reviews nor accreditation occurs at sufficiently frequent intervals to fill the role that an annual institutional effectiveness report would play. Additionally, an effectiveness report would sustain a substantial proportion of the reporting requirements of both program review and accreditation. Consequently, program review and accreditation activities now conducted in the State should supplement but not replace a comprehensive effectiveness report buttressed by an assessment plan. State policy concerning institutional effectiveness reporting and assessment plans should ensure that there is a close, positive relationship between the data and evaluation requirements of effectiveness reports and assessment on the one hand and program review and accreditation requirements on the other. The institutional investment in human, physical, and fiscal resources to provide effectiveness information and analyses should not need to be duplicated for program review and accreditation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Concern with educational accountability increased significantly in recent years in Florida as well as in other states. Nationally, the decade of the 80s was characterized by a surge of interest in assessment. While some states and institutions focused on student learning and the assessment of student performance, other states and institutions embraced the concept of assessing for institutional effectiveness. In many instances, the impetus for action through statewide policy came from state legislatures and state or system governing and coordinating boards. In other cases, individual institutions took the initiative to make assessment a priority on their campuses.

Florida, like most states, is in a transitional stage of assessing educational outcomes. In light of the need to better understand how well Florida colleges and universities are meeting state postsecondary educational needs, the 1991 Legislature directed the Commission to conduct a review of the status of outcomes assessment in Florida. Proviso language accompanying this study instructed the Commission to recommend approaches to measuring student and institutional outcomes. During the process of examining outcomes assessment, the Commission reviewed several related areas, including model practices in other states, policies and procedures related to student learning and institutional effectiveness, and the relationship between outcomes assessment and program review and incentive funding.

Individual institutions in the State have been committed to assessment for several years and conduct a variety of activities related to student performance and institutional effectiveness. In terms of statewide outcomes assessment policy, Florida was a national leader early in the 1980s in outcomes assessment by evaluating student performance

on basic computational and communication skills and requiring passing of the College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) for receipt of an associate in arts degree and entry to upper division status in a state university. Requiring performance--albeit minimal--in reading, writing, and computation was an initial step toward development of a larger framework of outcomes assessment. A second critical step was taken in 1991 when the Legislature enacted accountability legislation for the State University System and the Community College System.

Several events and forces have compelled the State to strengthen its interest in assessing the outcomes of postsecondary education. Concern within the business and industry sector with college graduates is one such force. Reduced resources coupled with increasing demands on higher education institutions are other considerations. Beyond these concerns, however, there are two overriding reasons why state policy makers should maintain an active interest in assessment: States can be positive forces for change by questioning colleges about student learning and by providing incentives for improvement. Also, states have a responsibility to the public to monitor the effectiveness of the higher education system (Education Commission of the States, 1991). As indicated earlier in this report, past assessment initiatives have not adequately answered fundamental questions related to how and how well Florida's colleges and universities are fulfilling state goals for postsecondary undergraduate education.

Several findings developed as a result of extensive discussion based on the areas raised in the proviso for this study:

Current Assessment Policy

- Florida has no comprehensive postsecondary assessment policy at the state level. Consequently, there are no established goals to determine if the postsecondary system is fulfilling its mission.
- On-going, systematic, and comprehensive assessment has not been a priority at most colleges and universities. Individual institutions and systems' offices have, in varying degrees, independently developed assessment procedures. While comparability and consistency in data collection and reporting has historically been questionable, recent accountability legislation for the Community College System and the State University System began to address these concerns.
- The relationships between current institutional assessment and State goals or between assessment and institutional mission and goals is not clear.

Need for Assessment

- Assessment is important for several reasons: To provide for regular evaluation of progress toward State goals; permit an institution to evaluate itself against its past performance, to compare itself with other institutions, compare itself with national and local norms, and compare itself against established norms; to respond to state accountability demands.
- Various conditions make assessment problematic: "mission drift" at the institutions; colleges' and universities' reluctance to accept externally imposed accountability mandates and prescribed performance measures; growing divergence between what the faculty want to do and what the public wants; difficulty in identifying meaningful measures for outcomes and accessing the data;

conflicting institutional priorities and commitments; inadequate human, fiscal, and physical resources; lack of clarity or consensus on critical assessment questions.

- Existing accountability legislation provides a good foundation for building a comprehensive plan to assess institutional effectiveness.

Related Issues

- Quality in postsecondary education is a primary concern, yet there is little information available to indicate how well the educational process works, how the students have improved as a result of their college and university experience, or what quality really means.
- Teaching at the undergraduate level is a major focus in Florida's higher education policy, yet existing reward systems within institutional structures do not adequately recognize teaching. This is a major problem and will be addressed in the Commission's Master Plan.
- There is little information available from institutions on how student learning is measured or whether institutions apply and assess principles of good practice in undergraduate education.
- Enhancement funding may be an effective way of encouraging institutions to focus on innovative or exploratory programs to improve institutional effectiveness. Incentive funding or competitive grants programs, however, require rigorous program evaluation components.
- Program review and accreditation activities could be strengthened by implementing assessment policies that foster a comprehensive, ongoing, approach. Weaknesses in current practices, such as the

absence of practitioners on program review teams and little or no solicitation of employer information, could be addressed through assessment policies. Likewise, institutions could more effectively and efficiently meet regional and specialized accreditation requirements if they collect, analyze, and use information that relates their institutional mission and goals to their performance.

Education/Business Roles

- *There is significant and widespread concern regarding the roles, responsibilities, and relationships between the education sector and the business sector.*
- *Representatives of business and industry question postsecondary education's commitment to meeting the private sector's concerns and being responsive to the private sector's needs.*
- *Educators believe they receive conflicting messages from the private sector as to what its needs, standards, and expectations are.*

The State's goals for postsecondary education and the institutions' goals should be the same: To achieve the best possible results with regard to instruction, research, and service from the most productive use of available resources. Policymakers at the State level require a variety of information to evaluate Florida's system of postsecondary education and its progress towards excellence. Concurrently, administrators and faculty in the colleges and universities need the kinds of information that will direct them toward improvements in order to achieve or maintain excellence. The State and its colleges and universities should be able to demonstrate and document that they are doing a good job. Evidence of institutional and student performance will provide Florida's citizens and policy makers with a better understanding

of the return on their investment in higher education.

Based on the study's findings, the Commission reached several conclusions regarding the legislative directive in proviso on outcomes assessment and its relationship with broader systemic issues in postsecondary education.

(1) Assessment of educational outcomes should be an integral and continuous part of the functioning of a postsecondary institution. The purposes and utility of assessment are greatly diminished when assessment is conducted primarily to support other periodic activities such as accreditation and program review.

(2) Consistency and comparability of assessment measures are important, and all colleges and universities plans should include components to assess the three major functions of a public postsecondary institution: instruction, research, and public service. Within the three primary functions, assessment should be conducted in several areas such as general education, student performance, and equity. The State and its institutions would most benefit if agreement is reached on the assessment of selected areas.

(3) The educational process and student learning should be central to institutional assessment plans. Assessment is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The study enumerates several principles of good practice which are presented as fundamental to a quality undergraduate learning experience. Each public postsecondary institution should routinely assess the application of such principles (i.e. frequent student-faculty contact, active learning, and high expectations) in the delivery of undergraduate education.

(4) The State needs to address fundamental and systemic issues related to

the structure, financing, management, productivity, and delivery of postsecondary education. Concerns examined in this report, including assessment, accountability, program review, accreditation, student learning, and institutional effectiveness, are symptoms of more pervasive problems in Florida's higher education system. Significant change may be required in the way the State thinks about providing and delivering postsecondary education. The preparation of a new master plan for postsecondary education will allow the Commission to seek extensive and broad-based public response relevant to issues concerning structure, such as the mission, goals, and provision for postsecondary education, as well as financing, management, and delivery of higher education in Florida.

(5) Conflicting forces internal to the institution, especially the public universities, have the potential of creating impediments to institutions' responsiveness to the needs of such diverse groups as government, business, industry, private organizations and associations. Instruction, research, and public service are all functions of public postsecondary institutions. Determining the emphasis and allocation of finite resources among these three functions will produce internal conflicts. The Commission received public testimony that public institutions are not as responsive as they should be to the needs of the wide range of constituencies which colleges and universities serve. The perception exists that there is an increasing difference between what the faculty want to do and what the public wants done. Inherent internal and external factors such as the faculty reward system may conflict with a state priority calling for quality in undergraduate education and teaching. A related concern is "mission drift" where colleges and universities become involved in activities tangential to their primary focus. Also, institutions focus too strongly on a selected aspect of their

mission or function to the detriment of other elements in the mission statement.

(6) Concurrently, business and industry have a responsibility to determine specifically what their needs are and articulate these clearly to colleges and universities. In this process, employers should differentiate among educational levels by identifying knowledge, skills, and behavior expected from recent high school graduates as opposed to associate or certificate recipients and baccalaureate graduates.

As a result of its review, the Commission concludes that building on existing accountability legislation to formulate an expanded, comprehensive, and robust state policy that focuses on institutional effectiveness and return on investment would be in the best interests of both the State and the institutions. Systematic, continuous assessment at the institutional level of selected core components as well as analysis of several key principles of good undergraduate education should provide the kinds of information needed to evaluate the level of quality present in the State's higher education system. Additionally, the data will assist colleges and universities in determining their progress in achieving excellence goals. Institutions should also be in a better position to manage external requirements related to program review and accreditation activities. Finally, information produced through a statewide effectiveness policy should serve students, parents, and policymakers by providing basic performance data that reflect educational inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes information.

Whereas the citizens of Florida would be well served by the implementation of a comprehensive, systematic, and continuous assessment process to establish excellence goals for postsecondary education and to

monitor the progress toward the achievement of those goals, the Commission does not recommend moving to such an assessment process at this time. As emphasized in the opening chapter of this report, the Commission believes that overarching issues related to structure, financing, management, and productivity of Florida's postsecondary education system first need to be re-examined. To recommend specific policy changes now, however, might suggest that such modifications in existing practices and procedures would be sufficient to remedy the pervasive problems confronting the State. The Commission does not wish to send such a message.

Instead, the State must first address some of the fundamental issues in Florida's system of postsecondary education, such as responsiveness to State, business, and industry needs, faculty productivity and costs. The upcoming master plan activity will provide occasion to explore those problems. Through the master planning process, the Commission will have opportunities to consult broadly with individuals and groups internal and external to education in conceptualizing Florida's postsecondary education system for the future. Regional meetings throughout the State will allow various constituencies of our colleges and universities to express their perceptions of the challenges we face as well as the role and responsibilities that postsecondary education should exercise. It is important to further explore the views of those sectors that need our students and whose support higher education requires. Useful information can be gleaned, for example from an understanding of the manner in which businesses assess colleges and universities as well as individual programs because they evaluate the postsecondary system differently from the way that educators approach internal assessment. A consultant representing the business and industry sector described four matrices his company uses to rate suppliers--including

educational institutions. Through the four matrices, each program or institution is rated on the basis of quality, program robustness, cost competitiveness, and delivery of services. The Commission believes it would be useful to inquire further into these perspectives, particularly since many of the concerns reflected by the business and industry sector have not been adequately addressed by higher education in the past.

The months ahead provide the time and the master plan process will provide a forum to use the results of this study and others that the Commission has completed to closely examine the totality of Florida's system of higher education, and it is imperative that the new master plan for postsecondary education in Florida present a vision for the future. From that vision should emerge an outline of the kind of assessment system that would best serve the State's colleges and universities and assure the citizens of Florida that the funds invested in the State's postsecondary education system are being utilized in the most effective manner to provide the greatest return on available resources.

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Appendix A

SECTION 240.214, FLORIDA STATUTES

240.214 State University System accountability process.—It is the intent of the Legislature that an accountability process be implemented which provides for the systematic, ongoing evaluation of quality and effectiveness in the State University System. It is further the intent of the Legislature that this accountability process monitor performance at the system level in each of the major areas of instruction, research, and public service, while recognizing the differing missions of each of the state universities. The accountability process shall provide for the adoption of systemwide performance standards and performance goals for each standard identified through a collaborative effort involving the State University System, the Legislature, and the Governor's Office. The accountability process shall be implemented in incremental phases, as follows:

(1) No later than December 31, 1991, and annually thereafter, the board shall submit to the Legislature an evaluation of the production of classroom contact hours at each university pursuant to s. 240.243. The evaluation must include a specific analysis of the contact-hour expectations resulting from the multiplication of the requirements of s. 240.243 by the instructional man-years generated through the legislative enrollment for-

mula. The analysis must, in addition, include the contact-hour expectations resulting from the multiplication of 84 percent of the positions provided for undergraduate enhancement by the contact-hour requirements of s. 240.243. The board may also conduct this analysis using alternative formulas. The board shall recommend to the Legislature any appropriate modifications to this section, s. 240.243, or other current policies. These recommendations shall be included in the annual accountability report submitted pursuant to subsection (3). The reports developed pursuant to this section shall be designed in consultation with the Legislature.

(2) By October 1, 1991, the Board of Regents shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, a plan for the implementation of the balance of the State University System accountability process. The plan shall be designed in consultation with the Legislature, the Governor's Office, and the Office of the Auditor General. The plan must provide a timetable that identifies the specific performance standards and related goals to be implemented each year and must provide for full implementation of the accountability process by December 31, 1993. The plan must also identify the data files that will be used to substantiate achievement of performance goals. If it is necessary to develop new data files or modify existing files, the plan must describe the content of such files and include a sample file format. The plan must include, at a minimum, data on the following performance standards:

- (a) Total student credit hours produced, by institution and by discipline;
- (b) Total number of degrees awarded, by institution and by discipline;
- (c) Total number of contact hours of instruction produced by faculty, by institution, rank, and course level;
- (d) Pass rates on professional licensure examinations, by institution;
- (e) Institutional quality as assessed by followup surveys of alumni, parents, clients, and employers;
- (f) Length of time and number of academic credits required to complete an academic degree, by institution and by degree;
- (g) Enrollment, progression, retention, and graduation rates by race, gender, and disability;
- (h) Student course demand analysis; and
- (i) Classroom utilization.

(3) Beginning December 1, 1992, the Board of Regents shall submit an annual accountability report providing information on the implementation of performance standards and achievement of performance goals during the prior year and initiatives to be undertaken during the next year. The accountability reports shall be designed in consultation with the Governor's Office, the Office of the Auditor General, and the Legislature.

History—s. 5, ch. 91-55.

Appendix B

SECTION 240.324, FLORIDA STATUTES

240.324 Community college accountability process. —

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature that a management and accountability process be implemented which provides for the systematic, ongoing improvement and assessment of the improvement of the quality and efficiency of the State Community College System. Accordingly, the State Board of Community Colleges and the community college boards of trustees shall develop and implement a plan to improve and evaluate the instructional and administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the State Community College System. This plan must address the following issues:

(a) Graduation rates of AA and AS degree-seeking students compared to first-time enrolled students seeking the associate degree.

(b) Minority student enrollment and retention rates.

(c) Student performance, including student performance rates on college level academic skills tests, mean grade-point averages for community college AA transfer students, and community college student performance on state licensure examinations.

(d) Job placement rates of community college vocational students.

(e) Student progression by admission status and program.

(f) Other measures as identified by the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission and approved by the State Board of Community Colleges.

(2) By January 1, 1992, the State Board of Community Colleges shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a plan for addressing these issues. The plan must provide a specific timetable that identifies specific issues to be addressed each year and must provide for full implementation by December 31, 1994. Beginning December 31, 1992, the State Board of Community Colleges shall submit an annual interim report providing the results of initiatives taken during the prior year and the initiatives and related objective performance measures proposed for the next year. The initial plan and each interim plan shall be designed in consultation with staff of the Governor and the Legislature.

(3) Beginning January 1, 1993, the State Board of Community Colleges shall address within the annual evaluation of the performance of the executive director, and the boards of trustees shall address within the annual evaluation of the presidents, the achievement of the performance goals established in the community college accountability plan.

History.—s. 12, ch. 91-56.

Appendix C

**COMPARISON OF EFFECTIVENESS COMPONENTS AND
ACCOUNTABILITY LEGISLATION**

Variables

Addressed in BOR Accountability Legislation

General Education	
Teaching/Instruction	• Number of contact hours of instruction produced by faculty, institution, rank, and course level
Access and equity	• Enrollment, progression, retention, and graduation rates
Retention	• Number of degrees awarded • Enrollment, progression, retention, and graduation rates by race, gender, and disability • Length of time and number of credits to degree completion • Classroom utilization
Performance of Student Athletes	
Performance of Graduates	• Pass rates on professional licensure exams • Institutional quality as assessed by follow-up surveys of clients and employers
Majors	• Pass rates on professional licensure exams • Length of time and number of credits to degree completion • Student course demand analysis
Facilities Utilization	• Student course demand analysis • Classroom utilization
Administration	• Student credit hours produced • Student course demand analysis • Classroom utilization
Research	
Public Service	

Addressed in SBCC Accountability Legislation

Additional Measures Suggested

	• Core curriculum and distribution of requirements • Policies related to course substitution, etc.
	• Faculty (preparation, demographic characteristics, salaries, etc.) • Application of principles of good undergraduate education (i.e., student/faculty contact, high expectations)
• Minority student enrollment and retention rates	• Student support services
• Graduation rates • Student progression by admission status and program • Minority student enrollment and retention • Student performance on CLAST	• Student support services (academic, career, personal) • College preparatory (remedial) programs
• Student progression by admission status	• Enrollment, progression, retention, and graduation rates by race/ethnicity and gender
• Student performance on state licensure exams • Job placement rates • Performance of AA transfers	
• Student performance on state licensure exams • Student progression by program	• Curriculum requirements • Course sequencing • Policies related to course substitutions, etc.
	• Space utilization • Maintenance
	• Physical facilities (library, labs) • Administrative processes and procedures • Administrative costs vs. instructional costs
	• Physical facilities • Administrative processes and procedures • Patents, licensing agreements • Grants and contracts awarded, patents, licensing agreements • Research faculty, graduate assistants, support personnel • Research citations and publications
	• Continuing education and training activities • Facilities utilization by community groups • Faculty and staff time on service activities